

The Dolphin was where it was at for Nintendo fans back in '99.



Itoi: "You don't feel like this is just the rambling of some stubborn craftsman then?"

NO - It's all right Miyamoto-san, this is all interesting stuff! This is the fifth part of our long interview series. We've gradually entered into the juicy bits of our discussion. Of course we'll be hearing about the rumored next-gen hardware, "Dolphin," as well.

Miyamoto: This hardware we call Dolphin, it's got a lot of power - so testing it takes quite a bit of time. Hearing that, you immediately switch gears and think, "Well that must mean it's hard to develop for," but that's not the case. That being said, it's cutting edge, so we're still not sure what kinds of interesting things we can do with it. That's what we're currently trying to find out. As you know, the CPU isn't ready yet, and it's common knowledge in this industry that we can't finalize the design until it's completely integrated into one board and running.

I guess I'll give a little more detail then. For instance, in games you'd have these flat board-like things called polygons - AH! that would be too big a hint. Ooh, that's no good. Er, maybe it's all right. Using the motherboards of console hardware up until now you'd have about 3,000 or 5,000 of these polygons moving at any given time. But if you took all of those polygons and lined them up - they'd only be enough to make up, say, a wave. But, for instance, today's digital cameras have 2.5 million pixels. And when you're talking about hundreds of thousands or millions of pixels, well that's a whole picture. As such, even if it's not just 3D you're talking about, it basically has enough power to draw that many separate points over and over. So if a camera has the

power to draw 2.5 million separate pixels and move each one independently, AND can control the color of each pixel separately, you'd be able to draw new kinds of pictures that you were never able to draw before.



Not that Dolphin is actually doing this kind of thing. (Laughs) But that's why toys are so interesting - you don't know what new things you'll be able to do with it. And that's what we're trying to do, trying to find out. Something that surprises you as soon as you see it for the first time. Either way, it's definitely never something you've seen on TV, but even as a video game - if you can't produce the kind of image that's never been seen before then people won't be interested enough to even give it a passing glance. (Laughs)

That's why the absolute minimum we have to achieve with this "Super Mario 128" is taking that 3D Mario that we first presented in Mario 64 and making something where he looks just incredible. But if at all possible, what I'd like "Super Mario 128" to be, as an interesting toy, is something that has enough value for players to go out and purchase the hardware for it. That's the end all be all. And so, that's what we're trying to do.

So, "What would you do with extremely high spec hardware?" - that's the question that our game designers want to hear, and it's getting their input on that that differentiates us from becoming your run of the mill, work for hire developer. Otherwise we'd just get hung up on porting Super Mario Bros. to each successive generation of hardware and then call it a day. That's why I, personally, have always tried to make sure that any ports we do are done externally. The same goes with movies or cutscenes - given that our primary goal is to make interactive games, making movies should not be a focus for our internal dev staff. In fact, that kind of thing has nothing to do with making interesting toys, so I've purposely made sure that we have never

spent much time or effort on it. Because then we'd be just another run-of-the-mill work-for-hire developer. If we go down that path of putting all of this effort into elaborate cutscenes, the logical destination that high spec hardware would bring us to is "just another developer." That's why avoiding that is part of our fundamental philosophy in how we run our business.



But, you know - there's a danger in aiming for high spec hardware. For instance - let's say someone makes an even faster automobile. Anyone would want to try it out. People say that speed isn't the only reason cars are appealing - but it's definitely a big part of it. And, even if you don't want to admit it, it's just fundamentally fun to go really fast! (Laughs) You would just find yourself saying, "Wow, this is fun!" as you speed along - you can't help it! And so I don't think you have a choice - that's just something you have to acknowledge and use to your advantage. I think going really fast is wonderful, in and of itself. And if you could expand on that enjoyment just from going fast, and nothing else, then we could just put out hardware for eternity. We wouldn't need any game designers. But I want to protect that position - the game designer's. Because if we don't, then there's no longer a reason to pursue the enjoyment you get from any car aside from the fast ones. Looking at these cars as simply a way to get from point A to point B, if all you base your purchase on is speed, then you won't have any reason to purchase a new car all that often. Next year rolls around and you say, "The one I have is plenty fast, so I don't need this one."

And what's worse is that our car can actually drive at a faster speed than the PlayStation 2s or what have you, if you're going to compare them. (Laughs) But it would be cheeky of me to tell you, "Not to brag, but it turns out that this car will really burn rubber if you put the pedal to the metal." (Laughs) It's meant to impress! (Laughs) But, it's not done yet.

But you know, I do think it's really awesome hardware. The Dolphin itself is amazing. But if all you focus on is how you could use that hardware and not actually follow through with it, then you're just patting the Dolphin designers on the back and that's it. "You guys made a beautiful piece of hardware, good job!" (Laughs) It'd be kind of a waste.



It would be sad if we made a Mario game for this new hardware and it didn't make the players say, "Wow, I've never seen anything like this before!" What would I do? About that...the only thing I can say right now is that I think we could make something really fresh the next time around. It's not just us - but our next generation of game designers, I think they'd be up to the task.

Not that we have a clear vision. If someone were to say, "Show me what that'll be," all I'd be able to say is that we're working on it.

But sure enough - there will be a Mario. (Laughs) I'll make Mario - the kind of Mario that everyone will want to buy. That much I'm sure of. Doesn't matter what it is - I'll think up something fun and interesting and put that character Mario in there. I don't want to make any games where we go - "Well, what we made is so much like past Mario games we might as well just put him in there." I want to make something new, and then we'll put Mario in, and if it turns out he doesn't really fit into it, we'll switch him out with someone else. Maybe we'll change it to Zelda. (Laughs)

That's one of the nice things about having all these different franchises - frameworks if you will. I think there's only a finite amount of work that you're able to output, as a person. So if you're making multiple things at once, the end result is representative of how much time you got to put into each one. And I think that focusing on creating just one title at any given point in time - you

certainly get something that's more personal in the end. But since we have these different character frameworks - Mario, Zelda - in a sense, we can focus our time and energy in different places. That being the case, I've recently come to think that it's not such a bad thing to have these series that you can continue building upon.



Super Mario Bros. is really what birthed the side-scrolling action game genre. And Mario 64 is what really solidified what the 3D action game genre became. And so both games ended up with a lot of followers. So because of that I feel that it's so much more important that we continue to make these genre defining video game experiences this year, and in the future, than whether a particular game is going to be Mario, or whether it will be Zelda. Plus, I don't think there are really going to be any players that say, "Doesn't matter what it is - if Mario isn't in it I'm not playing it." Whatever Mario's in next, it will be the appeal of that new kind of play experience that made us decide it was worthy of putting him in there. The kind of thing that makes players say, "I've never seen anything like this, wow!" THAT is what I want to make.

Itoi: Dolphin.

The name might not be Dolphin once it's released to consumers, but there you have it - Dolphin. I hope you'll join me in anticipating it for the next year or so until we can finally get it in our hands. When you do - be sure to remember what Miyamoto-san discussed here. I hope you'll let me interview you again at that point, Miyamoto-san.

Well then - for our next part we'll be switching gears as Miyamoto-san explains the appeal of a game that will be coming a bit earlier - at the end of this year in fact - Donkey Kong 64.